# 'MEET MEIN THE GARDEN'

# WOLF







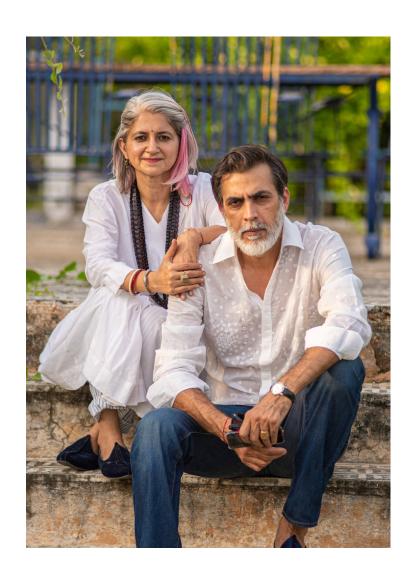


# **INTRODUCTION**

Our journey with Wolf does not have a fixed path: it meanders organically and finds direction with Time. This year, we wanted the stories to get bigger, and it was a special privilege to have Sakshi Gallery co-present with us, allowing for the seeds that get sown each season to grow and flourish into a garden!

We live in troubles times, and the invitation to the garden is an invitation to beat all ills and find the beauty and harmony that we all seek. It is a call that must not go unanswered.

Srila Chatterjee Baro Market September 2023



# **NOTE FROM WOLF**

In looking for a safe place to have conversations, a garden seemed apt, and when we stumbled upon Rumi's line, "Somewhere beyond right and wrong there is a garden, I will meet you there", we knew where we were going...

We exist in a time where there is blatant vilification of the 'Other': there is fear, and liberties depend on your surname. If we stayed silent the beast would come back to bite us.

Making our way through charbagh gardens: dissecting them, deconstructing them, and dreaming within them - we strive for a peaceful coexistence. The gardens were brought by the Mughals as secured spaces for leisure, pleasure, poetry and politics; we too use its beauty to retell their stories.

A garden in bloom - so we can speak in flowers.

Wolf Jaipur September 2023

# THE GALLERY

Sakshi Gallery is one of the premier galleries of India. Since 1986, we have developed a strong repertoire of Indian and International artists and continue introducing and supporting emerging Indian artists, and are delighted now to show Wolf.

Sakshi Gallery has showcased landmark exhibitions of Indian art all over the world, representing important Indian artists like Rekha Rodwittiya, Surendran Nair, Jehangir Sabavala, Manjit Bawa, Manjunath Kamath and others. It has endeavored to develop a strong program, working closely with important Indian and international artists as well as introducing many emerging ones. It has held exhibitions of Indian art all over the world and has introduced to the Indian audience work of illustrious international artists such as El Anatsui, Gregory Crewdson and Julian Opie.

Sakshi Gallery is located in the heart of Mumbai's art district in Colaba.



Who tends to this garden?
Who inhabits it?
Who partakes in its joy?
What blooms here?
What is harvested?
What wilts?
Who stops here?
Whose home is it?

We meet in the garden where the past, the present, and the imagined co-exist neither in conflict nor in peace. The garden is watered with tears spilled in remembrance and in reverence. Some tears run in vain, some in vengeance. The garden is nurtured by sweat and anointed with sacrificed blood.

This garden echoes a carefully planted chahar bagh, symmetric and symbolic. It is a labyrinth from where one can stray into a palace, into an atelier, into a market, into a tomb, or into chaos. This garden is made for reverie and delight.

There is space for you, whoever or whatever you are: a flower, a craft now endangered, a sacred thread, a discarded photograph, or a broken mirror. Here, you can be a participant and a witness. In this garden, the foreign becomes local. Ideas coalesce here. The 'other' is acknowledged and celebrated.

man tu shudam tu man shudi man tan shudam tu jān shudi tānagūyad kasī ba'ad az-īn man dīgaram tu dīgarī

I have become you, you have become me
I am the body, you are the soul
From now on, none can say
I am one and you are another.

Amir Khusrow (1253-1325)

Come, meet me in the garden.



# A BRIEF CASE OF BABUR

#### edition of 3

Size: height 17.5 in. x breadth 17 in. x depth 15 in.

Materials: Air India briefcase, vintage mirrors, scrap metal flowers, brass edgings, and spray paint.

Carnations, poppies, roses, and tulips are carefully packed into A Brief Case of Babur. His many lives – a prince without a land, a naturalist, a writer, a lover – all fit neatly, not in a square box but in a vintage suitcase, easily carried but hard to close.

# THE PANELLISTS

A discarded room-divider creates *The Panellists*. Each panel is a portrait as well as an exploration of the world the panellist inhabits, and a celebration of their personalities and contributions.

The Emperor, The Empress, The Gentlemen, and The Printeress meet in this garden. Their histories are legendary but are now obscured by time, agenda, and the fickleness of memory. The contemporary political scenario challenges their languages, legacy, and even their existence. In this garden, they speak softly and in metaphors. We read between the lines, decoding ciphers. We rediscover their lives and pay homage.



#### THE GENTLEMEN

Size: height 73 in. x breadth 30 in. x depth 7 in.

Materials: One panel from a folding room-divider, found glass baubles, hand-coloured carpet patterns, a vintage tile, a vintage smoking pipe, thread and fabric trimmings, found painting on fabric, a tazia model, brass jewellery, fabric from Brigitte Singh, a lac snake, found and reworked miniature paintings, wooden wing, bendable brass fish from a village in Odisha, cardboard water cooler scrap, brass sheet, carpet cuttings, found metal lizard, metal insects, embroidery hoop, and scrap metal flowers.

Flowers are central to being sophisticated, says the *Mīrzānāmah*, a seventeenth-century treatise on how to be an aristocrat. Just like his garden, the gentleman's home is to be filled with flowers— exotic and colourful. Flowers accentuate his strength and add to his charisma.

The gentleman is a seeker. He is the hero, brave and charming. Sometimes foolhardy. Sometimes just foolish.

The gentleman meanders through groves of flowers, stops to pay respects to his [perhaps estranged] ancestors, and pauses to confer with friends. *The Gentlemen* know how to enjoy a garden.



# THE PRINTRESS

Size: height 75 in. x breadth 30 in. x depth 9 in.

Materials: One panel from a folding room-divider, fabric from Brigitte Singh's atelier, nail-pattern wood blocks, found mirrored swan head, tazia form, sacred thread, ceramic bee from a flea market in Tokyo, honeycomb dipped in resin, rainbow glass, glass pipes from a discarded pelmet, brass jewellery scrap, beaded jewellery accessories native to Rajasthan, found surplus fabric, metal insects, and scrap metal flowers.

The Printeress resurrects lost patterns. Her garden blooms with centuries-old flowers, still fragrant, still attracting bees, and reverberates with the rhythm of a thousand prints.

The Printeress is mindful of each line, of colour, and of connotation. Cultures meet in her garden. She gathers material memories, and she bequeaths them to the future. She led us into this historical garden, and now shows us around it.

Poppies announce her presence: Brigitte Singh, *the Printeress* of the Mughal garden.



#### THE EMPEROR

Size: height 72 in. x breadth 28.5 in. x depth 6.5 in.

Materials: One panel from a folding room-divider, tazia screen, discarded old photos, pigeons made from layered sunboard, copper wires taken from burnt machinery, vintage ceramic tile, found wood and metal cross, MDF lotus by Meera Dabir, scrap metal sheet, wooden cow head, brass jewellery scrap, found gudri fabric, and scrap metal flowers.

The Emperor was called Jalal-al Din [Glory of the Faith] but was intrigued by the theosophy of different religions. Unable to read, Akbar patronised translations, illustrated manuscripts, and fostered debates. His was the reign of cultural encounters: foreigners were welcome as long as they brought exotic gifts, stories, and images. Some ideas took root and flourished. The repertoire of architecture grew with Akbar, as brackets and jālis became a part of Mughal design.

To honour the Emperor's multicultural mindset, a master tazia-maker crafted a monumental pishtaq [arched gateway or a portal], with stars decorating its border. Inside this Islamic structure, a symbol of Buddhism and Hinduism— the lotus — sits comfortably next to a Christian cross. Vintage black and white photos tell of more tolerant times, as pigeons flit about, totally unconcerned with Akbar's monumental legacy.



#### THE EMPRESS

Size: height 72 in. x breadth 30 in. x depth 7.6 in.

Materials: One panel from a folding room-divider, achada [fabric underlay used in block printing], gota trimmings, chikankari katran from the atelier of Abu Jani Sandeep Khosla, styrofoam pigeons, betel-nut crackers, tiger lock, brass jewellery scrap, vintage gun, antique gun, anklets, buttons, metallic trinkets, measuring tape, glass beads, old keys, discarded yarn, sewing machine scrap, and scrap metal flowers, embroidered odhana

Born Mehr-un-Nissa – sun amongst women – she was to become Nur Jahan, the light of the world.

A garden for her is lined with cypress trees, and roses made of metal grow wild and free. A pair of pigeons fly in, reminding of fabulous stories of gumption, and romance. Snowflakes of chikankari fall in this garden, reminiscent of the mountains of Kashmir. The garden shimmers with embroidery of gold.

Fragility, here, is just an illusion. The Empress shoots to kill. Tigers and enemies crumple. The empire is ruled with an iron fist draped in the softest muslin.



# **EMBED**

Size: height 12 in. x length 90 in. x depth 29 in.

Materials: Discarded khat, cedar roses, brass rod, and scrap metal flowers.

The khat [cot] was once ubiquitous in India, often found at rest stops and in courtyards, an open invitation for the weary to take a seat and have a chat. There is no room to sit in *EmBed*. It is distorted, resting on its frame with two legs pointing upwards, and two on the ground. The khat has become a bed of contradictions: barbed wire has replaced the rope, and thorny roses have replaced a soft sheet. *EmBed* accepts its lopsided frame and adapts itself to survive.

EmBed asks you to pause and consider what brings beauty, service, and value. Inscribed on the frame are four words: من man [oneself in Farsi; mind in Hindi], امن chaman [peace], چمن chaman [a flourishing garden], and सुमन suman [flower in Hindi]. Our garden fosters unconditional love.

Lying on *EmBed* is impossible yet *EmBed* invites lovers separated by space and ideology into its frame.



# MAKING SPACE

#### edition of 3

Size: height 36 in. x breadth 48 in. x depth 6 in.

Materials: Folding metal frame, glass baubles, wooden bed legs, metal insects, and scrap metal flowers.

A room of one's own is hard to acquire, but here is a chance to carve a little island of happiness, of contentment, perhaps even of fulfilment, for oneself. This is a safe space, where one's own rules apply.

It is not a perfectly proportioned chahar bagh. It shifts, contracts and grows. The four mismatched bed legs become columns making room, and when needed, flowers draw the boundary, rising to create pillars of privacy or a fence.

Making Space is a fluid sanctuary. It is an altar and a shelter.



# MARIGOLD & COCKSCOMB

Size: height 36 in. x breadth 75 in. x depth 13 in.

Materials: Discarded spring mattress frame, carved stone discards, glass baubles, metal insects, spray paint, red skeins, and scrap metal flowers.

Baham tāj-i khurūs va ja'farī yār/ Nishastah bā ham andar bazm-i gulzār Chunān bā ham basar-i yārānah burdand / Kih ābī dar chaman bī ham nakhvurand

Dar āghūsh-i hamand az mihrbānī / Chū yāqūtī kih andar zar nishānī

The cockscomb and the French marigold are lovers / Sitting together in the feast of the flowerbed They exist in such affection for each other / That they do not lose any time in the parterre without each other

Out of love they are locked in an embrace / Like a ruby that is set in gold

- Poet laureate Abū Ṭālib Kalīm Kāshānī (1581/1585-1651) at Shah Jahan's court. Source and translation: Dr Nicolas Roth.

The Marigold & Cockscomb, one foreign and the other wild, tell the story of colonisation, royal patronage and assimilation. The Columbian Exchange brought the African and French Marigold to the subcontinent and the Mughals took a fancy to it. These flowers were valued enough to decorate paintings, and merit a few portraits of their own. Marigolds featured on fabric, in buildings, and in gardens until they became ubiquitous.

The centre of the flowerbed comes alive with the warm colours of the marigold, and the presence of eight insects. Called Ramji ka Ghoda, literally Lord Rama's horse, the insects signify devotion and the free movement of seeds and stories.

Marigold, now an auspicious flower offered to the divine in any celebration, belongs to the subcontinent, perhaps as much as the Central Asian princes who came to this land and made it their home. The genda [marigold] is a common, extremely hardy, and a beloved flower, but those that nurtured it are personae non grata.



#### POPPY & LARKSPUR

Size: height 41 in. x breadth 40 in. x depth 12 in.

Materials: Discarded bed heads, scrap brass sheet, sewing machine bobbins, glass baubles, red and green glass beads used in jewellery making, gold foil, scrap metal jewellery, vintage mirrors, vintage tiles, and scrap metal flowers.

The shy larkspur appears with the poppy in several paintings. The larkspur is tall and elegant in contrast with the full-bodied poppy. The flowerbed gleams with opulence, like exquisite marble set with gemstones, and a hashiya [margin] of embossed gold.

The poppy and larkspur bloom annually. In gardens and in verse, they are planted in alternating rows: the larkspur in the border and the poppy in the calligraphic text. A devout poet credits this coupling to the divine gardener - God- for his creativity.



# **TAJGANJ**

Size: height 56 in. x breadth 44 in. x depth 6 in.

Materials: Vintage ledger papers, found hand-coloured carpet patterns, scrap metal finds, wooden brackets, vintage metal framed mirrors, wooden frame, mirror work on frame, vintage wood turned chess pieces, brass wire tree forms, and scrap metal flowers.

Western audiences have often questioned a Mughal miniature painter's handle on perspective, decried the lack of vanishing point, and completely missed out on a different manner of seeing and representing space. A Mughal painter effortlessly combines plan and elevation and transmits the feeling of being in a space to wasli [traditional handmade paper].

Tajganj is not an aerial perspective. It is not a map. It is a mosaic of ideas, of debunked myths, and malicious rumours. It reads historical documents to find that no hands were chopped when monuments were built. It sees sensitive laying of markets to keep people in business – long after the patron has gone. It does not need lofty domes as its canopies are created by flowers.

Tajganj references the antecedents to the Taj– monuments like the tomb of the I'timād-ud-Daulah, built by Nur Jahan for her father. It tells the story of the minds that dreamed and the hands that built them.









#### CHAR TUKDE EK BAGH KE

Four pieces; size: height 31 in. x length 31 in. x depth 2 in.

Materials: hand-coloured carpet patterns, scrap jewellery, embroidery, glass, clay smoking pipes, metal reproductions of tazia structures, and a rainbow mirror.

The chahar bagh is constructed from careful symmetry and is considered a mystery. Sunken flower beds rise to the level of pathways, making the garden a carpet that seasonally changed colour. A chahar bagh is laid outside palace pavilions, as a part of terraced gardens; tombs are often set with a chahar bagh, associating gardens with paradise.

This deconstructed chahar bagh is suspended in the air. It is a puzzle and a collage. The hero is framed – or trapped– inside a jāli [screen], yet birds roam free. Carpet patterns, once a blueprint of a weave, come to the fore, to bloom in this garden. Plants, flowers, walkways and fountains are carefully laid out, creating an atmosphere of passion, and of play.



# **CYPRESS**

#### edition of 10

size: length 72 in. x breadth 17 in. x depth 2 in.

Materials: wooden hangers, scrap sewing machine bits, metal support, gold paint, interior emulsion paint, gold skein, and scrap metal leaves.

The two trees here are cypresses. To the Greeks, cypresses were trees of mourning. To the Persians, they symbolised immortality. For the Mughals, these trees invoked paradise.

Roses climb all over them, and each branch proclaims Sahir Ludhiyanvi's scathing feminist poem, *Nur Jahan ke Mazhar par* [recited on Nur Jahan's Tomb]. In the last verse he says:

तू मेरी जाँन मुझे हैरत-ओ-हसरत से न देख हम में कोई भी जहाँ नूर-ओ-जहांगीर नहीं तू मुझे छोड़के ठुकरा के भी जा सकती है मेरे हाथों में तेरे हाथ हैं ज़न्जीर नहीं साहिर लुधियानवी

tū merī jān mujhe hairat-o-hasrat se na dekh ham meñ koī bhī jahāñ-nūr o jahāñ-gīr nahīñ tū mujhe chhoḍ ke ṭhukrā ke bhī jā saktī hai mere hāthoñ meñ tere haath haiñ zanjīr nahīñ

My love, don't look at me with amazement and disappointment, We're not the world's light [Jahan-nur], nor world's conqueror [Jahangir]

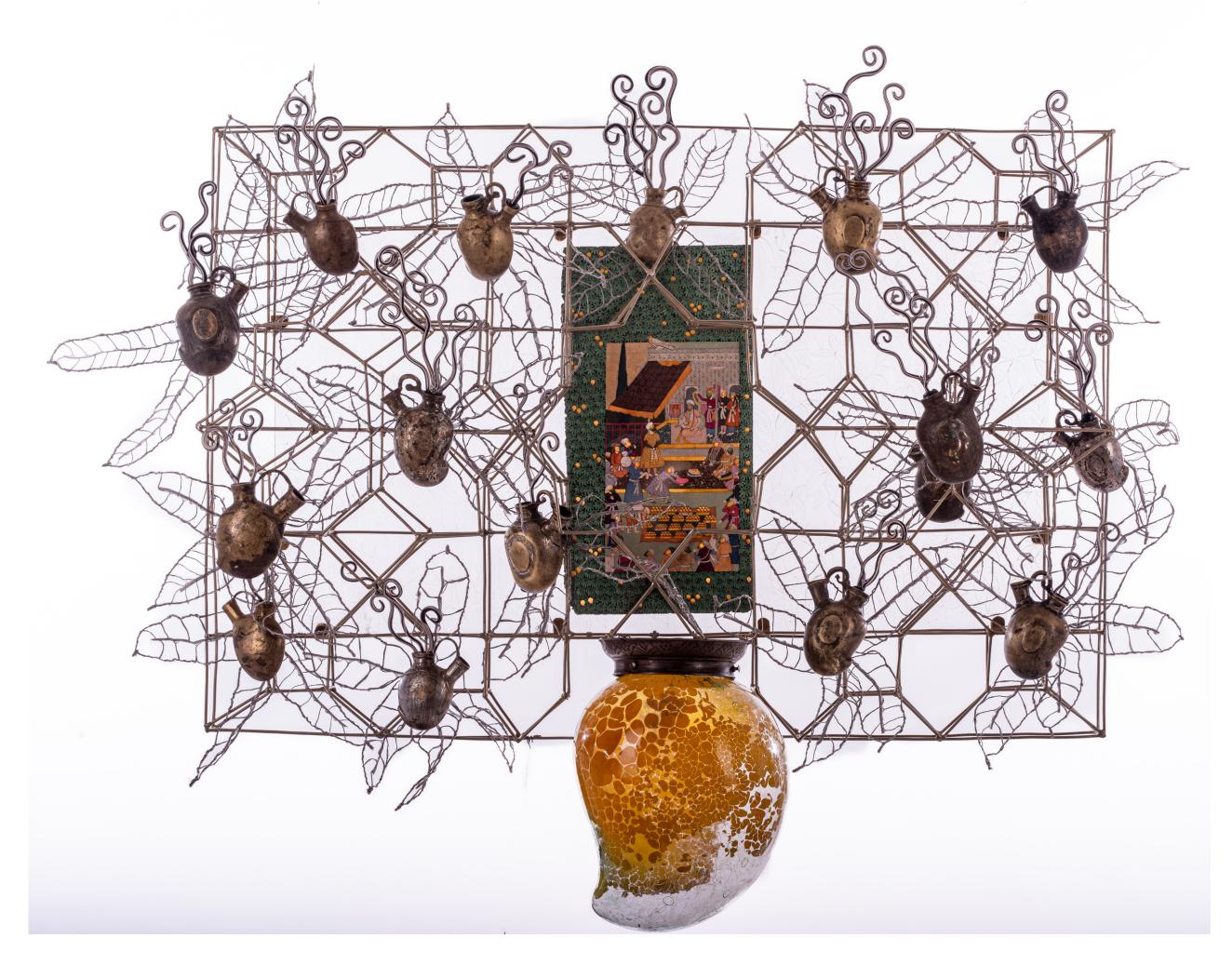
You can spurn me, and leave, In your hand is my hand, not a handcuff.

- Sahir Ludhiyanvi

Nur Jahan planted cypresses, grew roses and distilled rosewater for her beloved Jahangir. She ruled with him and for him. She nurtured her ambitions, talent, and skills to rule an empire. Jahangir cultivated his love– for his empress and for intoxication.

Nur Jahan held Jahangir's hand, with it, the royal seal. She may have taken charge willingly, or perhaps it was survival. Did she really have a choice?

Cypresses ask difficult questions.



# AAM

Size: height 32 in. x breadth 36 in. x depth 7 in.

Materials: a metal reproduction of the tazia form, vintage metal hubbly-bubbly (a type of handheld hookah), lac, incomplete miniature painting which was detailed with mangoes in the atelier of Riyazuddin, found glass mango, acrylic sheet, paint, and scrap metal leaves.

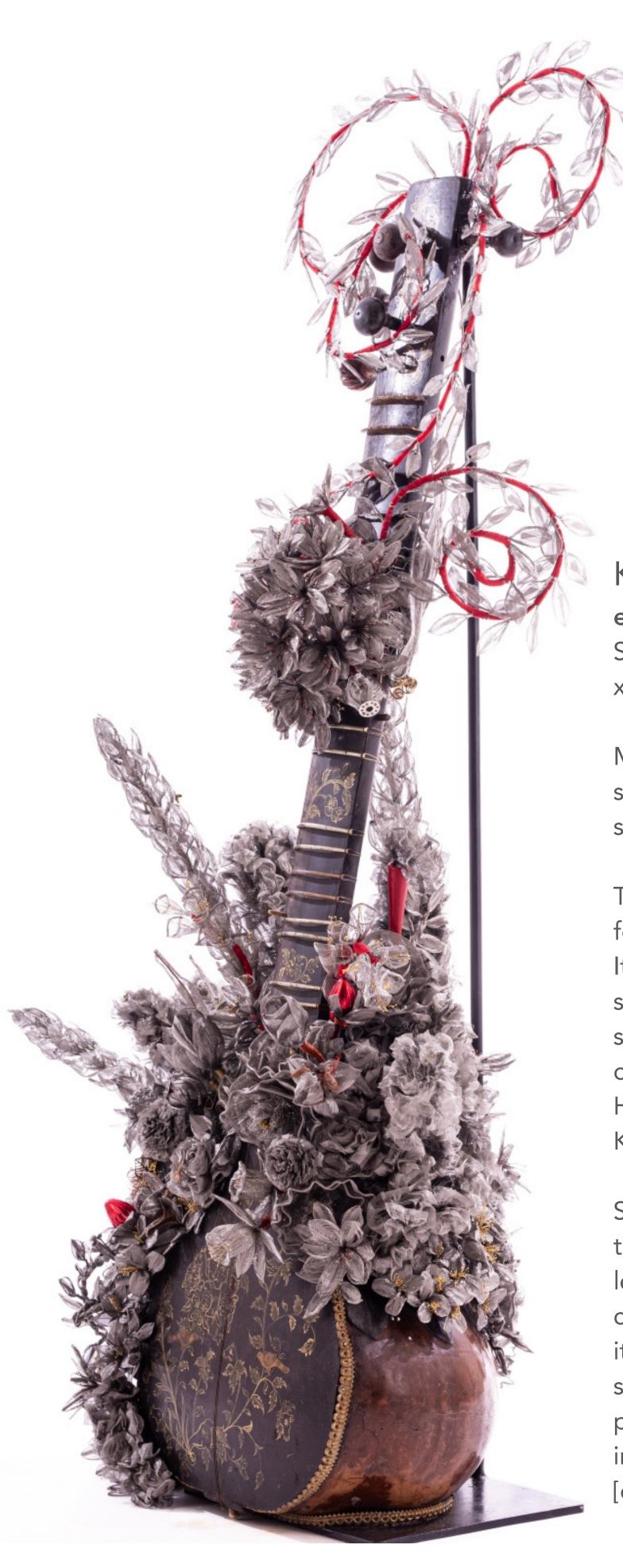
This crate of mangoes carries a few varieties of the fruit. Small mangoes, shaped like hearts, hold on to the grid as small puffs of smoke escape, releasing flavour and stories. Stories of fantasy, stories that obfuscate the truth, stories that the 'mango-people' tell themselves to escape harsh realities of life.

Mango symbolises summer, fecundity, and luxury.

A diplomatic present, a repeated motif in paintings and fabric,
From Babur to Bahadur Shah, the emperors all discuss mangoes,
Mangoes were an easy way into a ruler's heart.

Mangoes are the heart of the subcontinent.

Mango is more than just a fruit, anything but common.



# **KHYAL**

#### edition of 3

Size: height 53 in. x breadth 32 in. x depth 14 in.

Materials: Discarded sitar, metal stand, brass bidding, metal insects, scrap metal flowers, and paint.

This is an ode to *Khyāl*, a musical form that is lyrical, and imaginative. It is a composition in praise of the sitar, the eighteenth-century stringed instrument that sings. It celebrates the flourishing of Hindustani music from Dhrupad to Khyāl.

Sound does not come bursting out, the ālāp is gradual: first a small leaf, then the stem, and finally, the crescendo: a full bouquet. Gently, it curls around the sitar. Songs and strings attract life: a tiger is on the prowl as a waq-waq tree breaks into song, flowers bloom, a rasika [connoisseur] is moved to tears.



# SAHASRARA

Size: height 12 in. x breadth 12 in. x D 12 in.

Materials: Discarded fan cover, metal insects, found anthill in Shantiniketan (coated in resin in the studio), and scrap metal petals of lotus.

Sahasrara: a lotus with a thousand petals is at the heart of consciousness.

At the centre of this *Sahasrara*, is a white-ant hill, capable of destroying any structure, spilling termites everywhere. Will our edifices still stand?

In a land where the mind and sensibilities are anesthetised, the lotus waits for an awakening.



**KESAR** 

Size: height 12 in. x breadth 21 in. x depth 10 in.

Materials: Found tin box, sacred thread, metal armature, ornamental beaten brass sheets, brass binds used in jewellery, copper wires from burnt machinery, and scrap metal flowers.

One hundred and fifty flowers yield one gram of Kesar.

The best saffron in the world grows in Kashmir, almost crushed under combat boots. What flavour does this 1 gram of saffron add to our conscience?



# **OBLIVIATE**

Size: height 50 in. x breadth 50 in. x Depth 50 in.

Materials: Discarded CO2 pressurised cartridges used in shooting, found metal objects, x-ray films, metal grill, old photos, sacred thread, metal rods, a metal reproduction of a tazia structure, acrylic paint, and scrap metal flowers.

Fear fertilises anthurium flowers, whose poisonous petals reveal pressurised carbon dioxide cartridges at the centre. These pressurised cartridges are used to propel rockets, and to push bullets out of guns. While *Obliviate* looks harmless, like a tall flower-arrangement, it is toxic.

Obliviate is slick, seductive, and sly. Obliviate preys on a public that asks no questions, and refuses to – or cannot – think independently. People are lured into opaque echo chambers where only one narrative emerges and is repeated until it sounds like the truth.

Obliviate hides its deep reservoirs of bigotry. It has the potential to destroy spaces of harmony, and turn colleagues, friends, and neighbours into enemies. If left unchecked, Obliviate could wipe the garden out.



QALB

#### QALB

Size: height 84 in. x breadth 58 in. x depth 58 in.

Materials: Armature made from scrap metal and wrapped with sacred thread; found clay heads, thread, and a single scrap metal flower.

On the last day of the world I would want to plant a tree. W.S. Merwin, *The Rain in the Trees* (1998, A.A. Knopf).

At this juncture, the garden, our home, looks bleak and withered. The threat could be superficial, or it is possible that the rancour destroyed the land. Recovery depends on how deep our roots go.

We come to the last tree in this garden.

Is it Kalpavriksha that grants boons?
Is it the Zaqqum that emerges from the heart of hell?
Or the Waq-Waq that grows and procreates on its own?

It could be any tree you want it to be. The faces on the tree are silent—whether in damnation or in salvation – that is for you to decide.

बोल ये थोड़ा वक़्त बहुत है जिस्म ओ ज़बाँ की मौत से पहले बोल कि सच ज़िंदा है अब तक बोल जो कुछ कहना है कह ले -फ़ैज़ अहमद फ़ैज़

bol ye thoḍā waqt bahut hai jism o zabāñ kī maut se pahle bol ki sach zinda hai ab tak bol jo kuchh kahnā hai kah le

Speak, there is enough time,
Before the death of the body and voice,
Speak, for the truth is still alive
Speak out, say everything you want.
-Faiz Ahmed Faiz

*Qalb* is your beating heart, and your moral compass. The heart is free to choose a path. The garden is yours to re-plant and to interpret.



# A BRIEF CASE OF ZAFAR

#### edition of 3

Size: height: 21 in. x breadth: 22 in. x depth: 16 in.

Materials: Air India briefcase, a vintage mirror, brass edgings, and scrap metal flowers.

कितना है बद-नसीब 'ज़फ़र' दफ़्न के लिए दो गज़ ज़मीन भी न मिली कू-ए-यार में -बहादुर शाह 'ज़फ़र'

Kitnā hai bad-nasīb 'Zafar', dafan ke liye, do gaz zamīn bhī na milī, kū-e-yār meñ

So unfortunate is 'Zafar',
Two yards couldn't to be found
For him be laid to rest, near his lover
-Bahadur Shah 'Zafar'

In 1862, Bahadur Shah 'Zafar', the last Mughal Emperor, died in exile. The garden that Babur had planted, which flourished for centuries, wilted in Zafar's reign. There is no garden anymore, all that remains is poetry and a briefcase, haphazardly packed, lying overturned.



# **POPPY**

#### ₹ 22,000 each

Size: height: 18-24 in. x breadth: 4-7 in. x depth: 4-7 in.

Materials: Discarded hand-carved wooden blocks used in block-printing, scrap metal flowers, and metal insects.

Spring arrives when poppies bloom, so it must be eternal springtime on textiles, and in paintings. The Printeress was drawn to the poppy, growing it in her garden, and in the studio. In our garden, poppies are found in beds of hand-carved blocks. A muse for centuries, perhaps there is something intoxicating about the poppy?

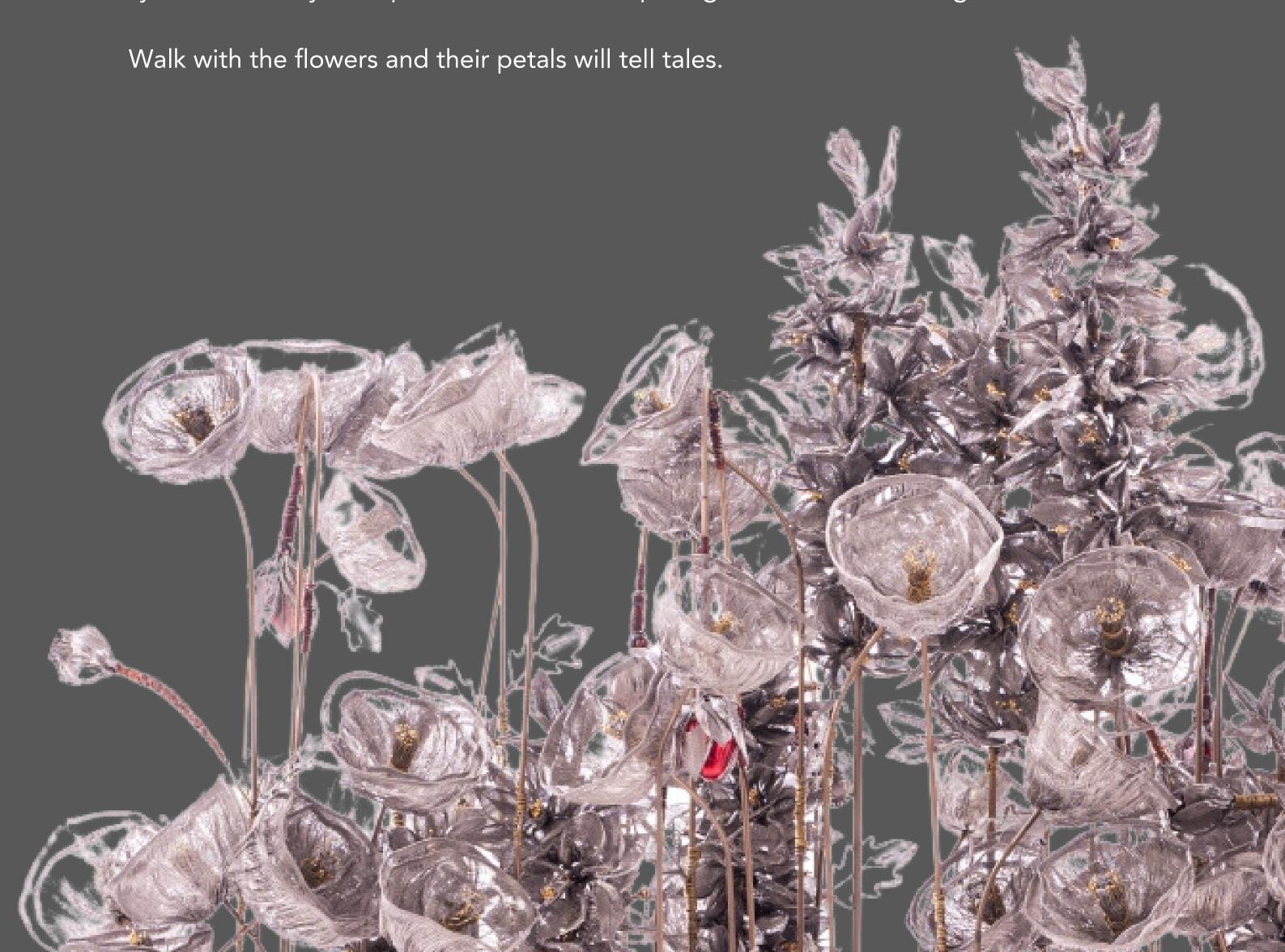
# THE FLOWERS

The flowers in Wolf's garden don't wilt, buds don't bloom, but there is life. Colour is rare, and metals gleam. Materials mix. Artists, craftspersons, gardeners, and welders tend to this garden. Wolf nurtures it with creativity, hardwork, and poetry.

Gardens did not reveal their secrets easily. Many [historic] gardens are now lost, buried under colonial lawns, neglect, and development. Some gardens are found in paintings, some in photographs, others in scholarship, and a few in one's imagination.

This garden story began with the exploration of the chahar bagh in Amber, and paths led into the world of textiles and carpets, and delicate craft traditions.

Flowers and trees were chosen with care: anthurium, cockscomb, iris, larkspur, lotus, marigold, poppy, rose, and tulip. These flowers come with histories, meanings and symbolism. They have personalities and are protagonists in their own right.





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Metal Insects craftsman - Jeetram Gadiya Lohar

Miniature painting - Riyazuddin's Atelier

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Carpenters: Jasraj, Sukhlal, Kailash Jangid

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Translations: unless specified, Aparna Andhare